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Woodward Book Seriously Harms U.S. Security

The major topic of conversation in the Nation's Capital for most of last week was not Judge Robert Bork's disintegrating chances or the Persian Gulf activity or even the Dukakis flap. The central subject was the just published book by the Washington *Post's* major muckraker in the area of national security, Bob Woodward.

Called *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA, 1981-1987*, the book was an immediate sensation, making headlines not only across the nation but across the world. And the "facts" that Woodward supposedly uncovered had their intended shock effects. Among the more provocative "discoveries":

- The late CIA director, William Casey, through King Fahd and his ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar, persuaded the Saudis to involve themselves in several covert action efforts, including a Middle East assassination attempt that went awry, killing 80 innocent people and injuring another 200.

- Casey suppressed solid CIA information that the Soviet Union, contrary to Casey's anti-Communist predilections, was not "the hidden hand behind international terrorism."

- Casey had admitted to Woodward, when Woodward supposedly visited him at Georgetown University Hospital in January, that he had been behind the plan to divert funds from the sale of arms to Iran to the Contras.

There were other "disclosures" as well. Egypt's Anwar Sadat, though "not directly in the pay of the CIA," seemed to act like a CIA "case officer at times." He also "smoked dope and had anxiety attacks." The Saudi king, aside from his involvement in killing innocent civilians in Beirut, "did a good deal of drinking contrary to the strict proscriptions of his Muslim religion."

Dominica's Eugenia Charles, who was key to the Grenada operation, may have personally received \$100,000 from the CIA (though she denied it to Woodward). El Salvador's Napoleon Duarte "was listed in the files as a CIA asset with a coded cryptonym." He fit in the category between "casual informant" and a full-blown "controlled asset."

On and on it goes in that kind of vein. Did the American people applaud the air strike against Qaddafi and welcome the Grenada invasion? Woodward's account of things is designed to give them second thoughts.

What emerges is what Washington has come to expect from a Woodward manuscript dealing with U.S. national security issues: "Revelations" that are not only fashioned to bring into disrepute military and covert operations, especially as they were conducted by the CIA under Casey, but also friendly nations and individual leaders who are battling communism.

Woodward's work severely embarrasses allies, compromises the most delicate CIA activities and almost certainly increases the vulnerability of the lives of CIA operatives abroad.

Even former CIA Director Stansfield Turner, who is hardly a fan of this Administration, said last week that "Bob Woodward did a lot of harm in this book by disclosing techniques of collecting intelligence and by hurting relations between the United States and other countries through exposures of things we did to those countries."

Rep. Henry Hyde (R.-Ill.), a ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee, called Woodward's book "very dangerous," adding: "It just seems to me that a lot of information was unwisely made public. It embarrasses us whether it's true or false and it certainly helps our adversaries."

Aside from inflicting harm on this country's security, is the Woodward account accurate? Intelligence experts give him bad marks. Roy Godson, a professor at Georgetown University and a specialist on intelligence, says: "The book clearly reflects the perspectives of his informants and they have very partial and selective views. I believe that much of his story is distorted and badly mistaken."

CIA operatives say that much of what Woodward is saying is just plain false. Herbert Romerstein, who spent almost six years with the House Committee on Intelligence, says he was keenly aware of a "great deal of CIA activities" when he was with the panel.

And in "all of those mentioned by Woodward that I was somehow aware of, Woodward was simply wrong."

One case where Woodward seems far off base is his suggestion that Casey suppressed a major CIA National Intelligence Estimate that supposedly stressed the Soviets were *not* engaged in international terrorism. Neither the estimate "nor its conclusions" were made public, writes Woodward.

"As far as the American public was

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concerned, the Soviets still stood publicly branded by the secretary of state as active supporters of terrorism. And the record was never corrected."

But that charge appears manifestly untrue. The Democratic staff of the subcommittee on Oversight and Evaluation of the House Select Committee on Intelligence released on Sept. 22, 1982, a report dealing with the major CIA intelligence estimate that Woodward clearly appears to be referring to.

The report not only concluded that the CIA intelligence estimate was of "very high quality," but said it "succeeded in being direct and clear in its conclusions that the Soviets are deeply engaged in support of revolutionary violence and directly or indirectly support terrorism, while making careful distinctions and pointing out areas in which evidence was substantial, or thin, or on which interpretations differed."

Woodward, in short, appears to have been wholly mistaken in claiming the CIA estimate was buried and in charging that it relieved the Soviets of accusations that they are a primary supporter of terrorism.

Woodward's accuracy has not only been disputed in connection with his telling of substantive CIA activities, but he has also run into heavy skepticism concerning his claims that he visited with Casey in his Georgetown Hospital room on the sixth floor for four minutes.

According to Woodward's account, Casey asked him if he had finished his book and then admitted to Woodward that he had known about the diversion of Iran arms sales money to the Contras all along. Why did you support it? Woodward said he asked, with Casey purportedly responding: "I believed" and then falling asleep.

Woodward refuses to say in his book or in public the precise day or time he entered Casey's room, maintaining only it was "several days" after CIA security guards had blocked him from gaining access to the CIA director on January 22. Woodward states he won't say because "somebody helped me and I'm protecting that person." But skeptics also note that if Woodward did pinpoint the day and hour, his story could then be subjected to a thorough testing, which he may wish to avoid.

The Washington *Times*, which has been digging heavily into Woodward's story, reported last week that a physician familiar with the facts, who spoke on condition of anonymity, charged that Woodward's account of the hospital meeting was "medically impossible." Casey's condition, said the *Times*, "gradually worsened into a severe form of 'aphasia' that left him unable to either understand or reply to questions."

Mrs. Casey and her daughter, Bernadette, both of whom we spoke to last week, have vigorously denied Woodward's account. Elaborating on what she initially told the media, Mrs. Casey said that "From the day he went in [to the hospital], he was

surrounded with CIA security, and there was a security man at the elevator [and] a security man watching the door of his room all the time." On the same floor, in another room, she said, there were three other CIA security men whose purpose was to relieve the other two. "There was constant security at all times."

Aside from all this security, Mrs. Casey continued, "myself and my daughter were with Bill constantly. I was on the night shift from eight to whenever she [Bernadette] would come in the morning. And she was on the day shift.

"We never had to leave the room. Our meals were served there. And there was a bathroom in the room. So we never had to leave it." Mrs. Casey also said her husband was in a room that "was in a very strategic place where the nurses and doctors could watch him all the time, because he was a very sick man...."

He had a cancer on the left-hand side of his brain, she added, which paralyzes the right side. "So he was paralyzed in his leg, in his arm, in his vocal cords in his neck, and half of his tongue, his right side of his tongue, was paralyzed. He rarely spoke because he couldn't speak.

"We never had a conversation, it was a very sad thing, from the moment after the operation until he died." He had "a little speech for a short time," but "he couldn't pronounce two-syllable words. He couldn't pronounce the words 'I believed' like Woodward said."

Bernadette Casey corroborated Mrs. Casey's version to us, saying: "He could not say, 'I believed,' it's preposterous.... He also has my father sitting up. He could not sit up alone. That was impossible, too. The whole thing is impossible."

Former Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Ray Cline, who has had a long and distinguished career as a high-ranking intelligence official, says he believes Woodward's book, strewn with anonymous quotes, is full of fiction, but has nevertheless been "damaging to our interests abroad." And he says he thinks Woodward "invented this hospital interview" to enhance the value of the book sales.

"It is my strong conviction," Cline told us, "based on my knowledge of the family and the security system, that he didn't get in the room."

But, adds Cline, "If in some weird way he did, that's even more unconscionable. Can you imagine in order to get a news story, and sell a book, you would risk the life of a dying man by intruding in his hospital room against hospital regulations, and then recognizing that... you were obviously dealing with a man in no position to communicate responsibly. I think that's immoral."

Woodward, it seems to us, has a major credibility problem, but the big question is whether the media—or at least the honest journalists in their midst—will continue to pursue the obvious investigative paths that have been opened for them.